

OFFICE LETTER

To Bruce Crawford Office Date Aug. 10, 1940

From Juanita S. Dilley Office Referring to

Subject File

Separate sheet for each subject. Omit all formalities. For office letters only.

I have held this manuscript several days waiting to get the picture to send with it, but it seems to be taking them an unusually long time to get them developed, so I am sending it on without the picture. Will send it another time.

A-1028

Juanita B. Dilley
Clover Lick, W. Va.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

Chapter 6 section 1 b

August 10, 1940

BETHEL CHURCH ---BUCKEYE

Just when the Methodist Protestant Church was first introduced into the Greenbrier Valley, there are no records to show. But as early as 1842 there was a well organized and prosperous circuit in this valley. On the roll of the quarterly conference were the names of many of the most prominent and influential citizens of the valley.

Perhaps the oldest society in Pocahontas county is at the Bethel Church in Buckeye, a small village a few miles down the valley from Marlinton. It is related that when the first Methodist Protestant minister came into this community, he was refused the privilege of preaching at the same place where the M. E. ministers had been holding services. Whether this was at a private house or public meeting house is not related. Mr. John Buckley, not a church member, invited this new preacher to preach at his house. The invitation was gladly accepted, and a housefull of people came to hear this "new kind of Methodist" preach his first sermon in that community. The people were so well pleased that a number of unconverted men went to work at once and built a log house in which to hold services. John Buckley donated the lot and James Rogers rived the shingles for the roof. James Rogers was afterwards a zealous and devout adherent of this church.

As soon as the meeting house was completed the new minister held a revival meeting and many of the men who had helped to build the house were converted, and became charter members of the society that was formed at the close of the meetings. While the revival was in progress seventeen of the young people left a prayer-meeting at the M. E. Church and attended the revival services. For this act they were expelled from the M. E. Church. When the M. P. Class was formed these 17 and eighteen others (35 in all) who had formerly been members of the M. E. Church, joined the new society formed at the new log church, then known as Buckley Church, but now called Bethel.

The oldest records show that Bethel Church had more than one hundred members in 1853; among them were many of the most prominent citizens of the community. The Overholt, Buckley, McNeill, Rogers and McKeever families were leaders in the society. Old Bethel church has given to the conference two itinerant ministers and a few local preachers of ability. Dr. A. L. McKeever and his half brother Rev. Moore McNeill, were members here. Three ministers wives have come from the membership of Bethel church: Mrs. Rev. D. S. Boggs, who was Sabina Laishley Buckley, named for Dr. Laishley's wife; Mrs. Rev. M. M. Everly, who was a Miss Overholt; Mrs. Rev. B. M. Mitchell, who was Miss Elizabeth Frances Pennell. Joshua Buckley, Jonathan McNeill, James Rogers, William Auldridge, Nellie Rogers, Elizabeth Fleming, Ruth Kee, Polly Kee, Angeline McNeill, Lucy Buckley, and Polly Buckley were some of the early members at Bethel. George McKeever, "Aunt Nancy McNeill," Mrs. Pennell, Mr. and Mrs. William McNeill and Mr. and Mrs. John Buckley are among the older members now. (1926)

The present house of worship at Buckeye was built under the pastorate of Rev. George W. Barrett, and Rev. M. L. Smith assistant, in 1882. It is a neat, commodious, frame building, and very creditable to the community and to the Methodist Protestant denomination.

The Greenbrier Valley has produced many able and distinguished ministers. And to old Bethel church at Buckeye, belongs the honor of having given to the West Virginia conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, one of its prominent and successful ministers, who for than forty years was active in the work of the conference.

Dr. McKeever was born July 24, 1844. He united with the Methodist Protestant Church at Buckeye in 1866, and was licened to preach by the quarterly conference of the Pocahontas circuit. He was admitted to membership in the annual conference with that famous class of 1871, six of whom served as presidents of the conference in succession: B. Stout, A. L. McKeever, D. G. Helmick, D. C. Weese, J. M. Conaway and E. J. Wilson.

Brother McKeever served many of the leading charges of the district, including: Harrison, Lewis, Georgetown, Buckhannon, Marion, Mt. Morris and Flemington circuits. He served two years as president, and was several times a delegate to the General Conference sessions. He preached his first sermon on Beaver Creek.

Dr. McKeever married Miss Sarah Young. One of his sons Dr. Otto D. McKeever, is a distinguished minister of the M. E. Church, and a famous lecturer.

From-----The Methodist Protestant Church
in West Virginia----Rev. I. A. Barnes D.D.
"-----"-----loyal."

July 24, 1940

An old church record kept by John Buckley shows that in 1841 Thomas G. Isherwood was the pastor of the Buckeye church. John B. Buckley who now has the record says that he is of the opinion that Isherwood was the first minister to serve this church, and was probably the one who was refused permission to preach in the M. E. church. He says that the Methodist Episcopalians were very strict at that time and never permitted any one of another denomination to use their church, and for this very reason they lost their influence in the community and for a time had very few members. Finally a man by the name of Harper was sent to take over the pastorage, he allowed them some liberality and succeeded in organizing a right good class, but it was never as strong as it had been before they expelled some of the members for going to the Methodist Protestant meeting.

According to this record, the next minister, to follow Isherwood, was William Bolton. It gives the class list for 1841 as follows;

William H. Linsey (probably Lindsay)

Paul Linsey

Mary Esmeay, Cutlip Geiger, Sarah Geiger,
James E. Johnson, Elizabeth Barlow, Hough A. Sharp,
Virginia F. McNeill, Mary E. Moore, Henry Moore,
Francis Harper, William Harper, Jonathan McNeill,
Mildred McNeill, William C. McNeill, Rachel Thomas,
Jenny Kennison, William Collins, Charles Collins,
Samuel Collins, John Cassell, Mary J. Cassell,
Margaret Gum, James Gum, McBride Gum,
Mary Johnson, Sarah Johnson, Eliza Johnson,
Samuel W. Moore, Medora Grimes, A. H. Grimes,
Remained loyal.

Washington Sharp, Nicholas Sharp, Samuel Grimes,
 George Lightner, Henry Lightner, Sarah Lightner,
 Susannah Lightner, James Moore, Margaret Moore,
 David Grimes, Mary Grimes, Robert Sharp, Mary Sharp,
 Arthur Sharp, Betsy Sharp, Andrew Grimes, Margaret Grimes,
 Anthony Lightner, Elenor Lightner, David Lightner,
 Adam Lightner, Rachel McClure, George McLaughlin,
 Sarah McLaughlin, Elizabeth McCordle, James McCordle,
 John McCordle, Samuel Gibson, Thomas Hogsett,
 Jacob Shinaberry, Margaret Shinaberry, Anna Shinaberry,
 Peter Shinaberry, Jesse Gregory, Mary Ellen Buckley,
 Joshua Buckley, Lucenda Buckley, Ruth Eliza Buckley,
 Elizabeth Buckley, Harmon Sharp, William Sharp,
 Hough Calvin Sharp, Mary Ellen Sharp, Clarisa Bolton,
 Elizabeth Bolton, Asa Shinn McNeill, Rachel Kellison,
 Martha Kellison, James Kellison.

From this class list, one can easily see that this new kind of Methodism attracted people from the surrounding countryside for a radius of many miles, from Browns Creek, Poage Lane, Elk and many other communities. This list, however, does not give the names of the Overholts, Pennells and McKeevers ^{and Rogers} who were all loyal members. Perhaps they did not join until a later date.

Mr. Buckley says that all of those who were expelled from the M. E. church, remained loyal members of the M. P. church, never returning to the M. E. church. He said that in 1853 there were 105 members in the Bethel church at Buckeye but that later they sent in some uneducated preachers and the people got so discouraged and disgusted because they could not compete with the other churches that they drifted off. Only a few remained loyal.

Then they sent in better preachers for a while, but they were never able to build up the class again. Claiborne McNeill held the Sunday School together for many years during the time that the uneducated preachers were there.

There has been no Methodist Protestant minister at this church for the last ten years, and at the present time (1940) there are only five members.

Mrs. Susan McNeill,

Mrs. Nancy McNeill,

Mrs. Lottie Pennell,

Mrs Margaret Thomas,

and John B. Buckley.

Mr. Buckley says that none

of them are able to get out to church because of their age. All of the younger members have joined some other denomination.

According to Prices' History, Moore McNeill, the youngest son of William the teacher, became a preacher, and entered the itineracy of the auspices of the Methodist Protestant Church, and traveled many years with marked success and acceptance in the counties of West Virginia bordering the Ohio River.

Asa Shinn McNeill was also a preacher, but for some reason never took a regular circuit. He, however was considered a very able preacher, often substituting for other ministers and Presiding Elders.

Mr. Buckley says that as far back as he can remember, the Presbyterians have used this church, with Dr. Dunlap, Davis Sydenstricker and Wm T. Price as their earliest preachers. No doubt the same ones that served other Presbyterian churches also preached to this Presbyterian class at Buckeye. The first Presbyterian members at this church were the McClintics. For many years this church has been served by the Presbyterian minister from the Marlinton church.

At the present the Presbyterian minister is the only one
that preaches in this church.

In the land book for 1938, Bethel church at Bucks is
valued at \$500. and the lot at \$50. making a total value of
\$550.00.